

**U.S. Department of Education - EDCAPS
G5-Technical Review Form (New)**

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/17/2018 05:30 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: The Institute for Excellence in Education (U282T180014)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance of the proposed project		
1. Significance	35	29
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	27
Quality of Management Plan/adequacy of resources		
1. Management Plan/Resources	15	12
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	8
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	10	10
Sub Total	100	86
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process		
1. Building Capacity	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
Empowering Families and Individuals		
1. Families and Individuals	5	0
Sub Total	5	0
Total	110	91

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - CSP National Dissemination - 1: 84.282T

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: The Institute for Excellence in Education (U282T180014)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance of the proposed project

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 35 points):

(1) The potential for generalizing from the findings or results of the proposed project;

(2) The extent to which the results of the proposed project are to be disseminated in ways that will enable others to use the information or strategies;

(3) The likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement; and

(4) The extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population.

Strengths:

Alternative charter schools are typically rated by the state performance model much lower than their counterparts that operate comprehensive charter schools. (Pg. e22) Authorizers are reluctant to use different accountability measures with alternative charter schools, and this project will prove to be essential in providing assistance in identifying criteria to fairly evaluate the school's performance. This information can be generalized to all types of alternative charter schools. (Pg. e22 – e28)

The network of charter schools that each partner has developed will provide a widespread vehicle for dissemination. A variety of tools and materials will be posted on a supported website, conference presentations at both the national and state levels and professional learning experiences provided by the National Authorizer Leadership Team (NALT) that is being developed for this project. (Pg. e29 – e30)

As noted in the narrative (Pg. e31), alternative charter schools are a small percentage of any authorizers portfolio so their performance evaluation does not carry much importance within the authorizers timeframe. Additionally, alternative schools are disproportionately represented among low performing schools, hence another reason to target the authorizers with small numbers of alternative charter schools. (Pg. e23) This project will provide alternative charter school authorizers with a researched and developed framework in which to judge these schools using appropriate measures. Alternative charter school authorizers will be able to share this information quickly in their networks thereby initiating systemic change. (Pg. e31 – e32)

Through regional networks developed as a part of this project, information will be disseminated to three local regions to help develop better capacity to improve alternative charter school authorizing practices. By disseminating this information through regional areas, information will be tailored to the specific alternative charter schools in the area in a quicker method to meet their individual needs. (Pg. e33 – e34)

Weaknesses:

There is always the possibility that this project will face the same challenges as previous efforts due to the same barriers—such as lack of authorizer time, or not enough alternative charter schools to be concerned. Without addressing the identified barriers in the project plan, the applicant has not mitigated the previous challenges.

There is not overwhelming evidence that this plan will lead to local capacity to improve the authorizing practices. While there are many dissemination activities planned, there is a lack of focus on the individual charter schools and their specific needs. (Pg. e33 – e34)

Reader's Score: 29

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 30 points):**

(1) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c));

(2) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable;

(3) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition; and

(4) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.

Strengths:

The rationale includes assisting alternative charter school authorizers to develop a new method with which to judge the performance of these charter schools. By developing more “performance based measures” than using the compliance based measures most authorizers currently use, they will find a more true representation of how the alternative charter school is meeting the needs of their students. (Pg. e35 – e43)

Project goals and objectives are clearly outlined and include measurable performance measures. These goals are aligned to the Logic Model as presented in the narrative. This project includes both process and outcome measures in which to evaluate success. (Pg. e43 – e51)

This project is targeting small authorizers of alternative charter schools to develop a system of authorization that will be easily accessible to all schools through networks and/or live tools. The creation of flexible authorizing tools armed to help authorizers pick and choose what works best for them is the exceptional piece. The applicant is giving the charter school what they need to move their metrics to a more individualized approach. (Pg. e51 – e53)

This project will be disseminated through regional networks of charter school authorizers, school leaders and charter school support organizations. An active website will contain upgraded information on alternative methods with which to evaluate these alternative charter schools.

(Pg. e54)

Weaknesses:

Dissemination activities rely heavily on groups of people getting the message out to authorizers. The dependence on indirect methods of dissemination through several external groups and personnel does not guarantee the message will be received or that it will impact their processes. (Pg. 54)

The applicant did not address how the selected authorizers for this project were chosen.

Reader's Score: 27

Selection Criteria - Quality of Management Plan/adequacy of resources

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and adequacy of resources for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan and adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 15 points):**

- (1) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks;**
- (2) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project; and**
- (3) The relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project.**

Strengths:

Roles and responsibilities are well-defined along a timeline that lists activities and deliverables by quarters. Activities are linked to the objectives they support which clearly demonstrates alignment between the two. (Pg. e58 and e131 – 136)

The applicant did a good job comparing the cost of this project (\$2.2 million) to what the cost is for a high school student that does not graduate. Using this perspective not only validates the adequacy of the allocated resources, but it is a good representation that further supports the importance and significance of this project. (Pg. e58 – e59)

According to the narrative, each organization is heavily committed to the project. Each partner brings to the table an important piece of this project; the Institute has the Epicenter based information management system while Momentum has the data and alternative school expertise. Together, these two partners will provide useful information to authorizers of alternative education centers. (Pg. e59 – e60)

Weaknesses:

The project costs are heavily weighted in personnel. Given the fact that there are many individuals and stipends that will be paid, this is understandable; however, there is not compelling evidence to indicate it is reasonable. More specificity surrounding the budget/costs is needed.

The entities entered into a strategic partnership in 2017 to work on this project. The application did not include a copy of that partnership agreement. (Pg. e60)

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 10 points):**

- (1) The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability;**
- (2) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director or principal investigator; and**
- (3) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.**

Strengths:

Both entities involved in this project seek and provide opportunities for individuals from underrepresented population. All individuals that apply for employment in either organization are considered for employment based only on their qualifications. (Pg. e62)

The project directors are named – one from each partner organization. Both are well qualified for the position and have extensive experiences within the charter sector. This arrangement will provide a good balance of power between the entities. (Pg. e62 – e63)

Key project personnel will be provided as needed on this project. The individuals named are experienced and qualified in all charter sectors, including some with very early experience in developing the charter models and practices in a variety of states and authorizers. (Pg. e65 – e70)

Weaknesses:

The application did not include enough information on how these two entities seek out underrepresented groups of people for employment. (pg. e62)

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible (up to 10 points).**

Strengths:

The evaluation plan is well designed with specific data collection tools that will determine the extent to which each performance measure is met. The narrative also provides an explanation around methods of assessment for goals that are not easily measured within this project, such as goal #3 which focuses on dissemination activities. The evaluator will use varying methods of data analysis to provide both quantitative and qualitative measures for the objectives. (Pg. e71 – e75)

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions**Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process**

- 1. Competitive Preference Priority 1--Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process for Educational Agencies with the Most Need (Up to 5 points, only available to applicants meeting Absolute Priority 1)**

Projects that propose to target one or more of the following: States that have enacted laws in the last five years allowing charter schools to open; authorized public chartering agencies (as defined in the NIA) with fewer than ten charter schools; and authorized public chartering agencies that authorize a significant number

of charter schools experiencing significant low performance or non-compliance with academic, financial, governance, or operational (including school safety) requirements.

Strengths:

This application meets the Competitive Preference Priority by proposing to target an authorized public charter agency that authorizes a significant number of charter schools experiencing significantly low performance. The applicant has chosen to target new and small authorizers, specifically charter schools that provide an alternative education to high risk students that are in danger of dropping out. (Pg. e22

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Empowering Families and Individuals

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2--Empowering Families and Individuals To Choose a High-Quality Education That Meets Their Unique Needs (Up to 5 points)

Projects that are designed to address increasing access to educational choice for one or more of the following groups of children or students:

- (i) Children or students with disabilities.
- (ii) English learners.
- (iii) Students who are Indians, as defined in section 6151 of the ESEA.
- (iv) Children or students in communities served by rural local educational agencies.

Strengths:

The applicant did not address this criterion.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not address this criterion.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
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Status: Submitted

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: The Institute for Excellence in Education (U282T180014)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance of the proposed project		
1. Significance	35	33
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	27
Quality of Management Plan/adequacy of resources		
1. Management Plan/Resources	15	12
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	8
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	10	10
Sub Total	100	90
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process		
1. Building Capacity	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
Empowering Families and Individuals		
1. Families and Individuals	5	0
Sub Total	5	0
Total	110	95

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - CSP National Dissemination - 1: 84.282T

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: The Institute for Excellence in Education (U282T180014)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance of the proposed project

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 35 points):

(1) The potential for generalizing from the findings or results of the proposed project;

(2) The extent to which the results of the proposed project are to be disseminated in ways that will enable others to use the information or strategies;

(3) The likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement; and

(4) The extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population.

Strengths:

The applicant provides an excellent demonstration of the significance of the proposed A-Game project. The applicant a) clearly documents the challenges authorizers face across the country to accurately determine AEC student achievement and school wide outcomes; b) provides a definition of 'high risk' students and uses this definition to demonstrate how these students perform differently than their grade-level peers; c) makes a clear connection between traditional state and authorizer accountability frameworks and the impact of those systems on the authorizer's ability to make sound decisions regarding charter applications and renewals; d) provides a bold and transformative set of solutions to this complex problem; e) demonstrates how this set of solutions will be designed and tested in 8 states and DC and then disseminated with supports in 7 new states; and f) ultimately generalizing and disseminating the work in such a way that it will be clearly accessible and useful to all AEC authorizers and any LEA or SEA interested in transforming accountability systems to better inform decision-making related to student achievement and schoolwide outcomes.

Specifically, the applicant offers a compelling argument that high-risk students enter AECs with achievement levels below their grade level peers and traditional accountability systems used both by authorizers and state education agencies (SEA) do not adequately represent student growth which can result in high quality AECs being closed and low-quality AECs to remain open (e25). The National Authorizer Leadership Team (NALT) consists of authorizers with experience in differentiated accountability and will take responsibility for not only creating open source tools and resources, but will use them within their own portfolio and also provide technical assistance to authorizers participating in Regional Capacity Building Network (RCBN) (e25). The project demonstrates the capacity of both National Charter School Institute (NCSI) and Momentum to engage in and facilitate the project at a national scale (e59-62). This multi-year, national project will provide direct implementation supports to 30 authorizers in 7 additional states and a larger field test for all resources (e29-30). The project identifies strategies for dissemination that will further increase access to resources across the US including direct outreach to school district authorizers that serve only 1-2 AECs in a manner that will not only inform district authorizing but can also be used within their own schools to better support AECs and all students. Finally, the project has the potential for significantly transforming authorizer accountability at the local (authorizer and school) level, state level (through SEA dissemination/policy change) and nationally will impact a minimum of 15 states (e46-55) and likely all 44 states with charter laws.

Weaknesses:

While the applicant provides an excellent response, there are some weaknesses noted. For instance, the purpose of RCBN is to disseminate and support 30 additional authorizers but it is unclear how those supports will occur, beyond the participation of NALT members in the RCBN (e29-30). Therefore, it is challenging to assess the extent to which the project will fully build capacity resulting in system improvement in the 30 RCBN authorizers. In addition, the project plans to disseminate to all authorizers that have AECs in their portfolio with an emphasis on LEAs that serve 1-2 AEC schools. While the project outlines plans for outreach and has an activity on the timeline (e135) that supports this, the vast majority of the plans require these small LEAs to actively engage in order to learn about this support. Yet, the applicant also notes the lack of capacity of such organizations, so it is unclear the extent to which the traditional dissemination strategies described will engage small district authorizers. In general, district level authorizers such as these, do not see themselves as 'authorizers' and lack engagement in charter conferences or support.

Reader's Score: 33

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 30 points):

- (1) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c));**
- (2) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable;**
- (3) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition; and**
- (4) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.**

Strengths:

The proposal provides an excellent description of the quality of project design. The applicant's rationale is detailed and purposefully crafted (e38). The applicant provides a logic model that gives a clear and concise graphic demonstrating the project design. The logic model exceeds federal standards. The project proposal includes well defined goals, objectives and outcomes that are clearly specified and measurable (e48-50). Outcomes measure both process (creation of tools and access to tools) and implementation (use of tools) of the project (e72-76).

The proposal represents an exceptional approach to this competition's priorities and description of the strategic partnership of NCSI and Momentum demonstrate the applicant's capacity for both project implementation and broad dissemination. For example, the narrative describes NCSI's work in 27 states and the District of Columbia (DC) as well as the development and implementation of the Epicenter tool that improves school (and authorizer) abilities to gather and use data for instructional design and monitoring. Momentum's experience working closely with SEAs as well as a variety of districts and authorizers specifically to develop processes to measure and monitor outcomes of risk youth using non-traditional methods (e29-30). By bringing to bear the resources of both organizations, the applicant is well positioned to create a holistic compliance and performance measurement system that can be personalized and adapted by authorizers to meet the unique needs of their AECs. This initiative will also allow schools and authorizers to share comparable data which will provide greater context for authorizers, leading to more effective and reliable decision making (e48).

The project was clearly defined and through the National Authorizer Leadership Team (NALT) will engage 11 authorizers of various types and from 8 states – coast to coast (e29-30). NALT members have significant experience in both authorizing AECs and using alternative means of assessing and evaluating those charters. These authorizers will share their best practices with each other and work with each other, NCSI and Momentum to create customizable tools and resources. The purpose of the tools is well articulated. The tools will assist authorizers in effectively evaluating both new applications and renewals; create a framework focused on student growth and performance; provide policy suggestions for authorizers, SEAs and national organizations; and test the resources within their own authorizing practices (e29-30).

Then, through the Regional Capacity Building Networks (RCBN), NALT members will provide disseminate the practices and provide ongoing technical support and mentoring to 30 authorizers interested in shifting to personalized, growth focused evaluation systems. By year three, the project partners will then move to broader dissemination with a goal of reaching all 204 AEC authorizers in the US (354-55). In conclusion, this project is an exceptional approach to the competition's priorities because it is a focused project, with a unique perspective that will be relevant to not only the target authorizers, but has the potential to transform local, state and national policy regarding the assessment and evaluation of alternative education programs and schools across the country.

Weaknesses:

While the project design is excellent, it does not meet outstanding without weakness standard. The application lacks a clear description of the process for determining membership in the NALT and for identifying the target states. The applicant does provide some examples, including Ohio and DC, that justify expertise, but beyond this, it is unclear how these states and leaders were chosen (e41).

The applicant is measuring outcomes for implementation, but the overarching goal of the project is transformation and the application lacks outcomes that will provide evidence of transformation. For example, goal 3 outcome measurements (e75) will monitor progress on the percentage of NALT and RCBN authorizers that implement at least two tools. The project would be significantly more powerful if it also measured the impact that the use of the tools has on NALT member's ability to effectively and efficiently monitor school progress.

Reader's Score: 27

Selection Criteria - Quality of Management Plan/adequacy of resources

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and adequacy of resources for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan and adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 15 points):**

(1) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks;

(2) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project; and

(3) The relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project.

Strengths:

The management plan and adequacy of resources for the proposed project are excellent. The applicant provides a comprehensive timeline that includes specific, detailed and measurable milestones. The timeline also set goals for task completion based on a reasonable timeframe and describes the milestone deadlines quarterly (e130-136). For example, in year 1 the timeline describes that it will identify RCBN members by Sept 2019 so that it implementation can begin in January 2020 (e132). The timeline also articulates NALT tasks during their year one design work and topics for each RCBN sessions (e130-136). Additionally, the timeline includes development of sustainability plans during year three which further demonstrates the comprehensiveness of the management plan.

The applicant describes specific responsibilities for project management, including a check and balance system giving both NCSI and Momentum co-director responsibilities. In addition to the project leadership team, the application also describes an advisory board consisting of national leaders including SEAs, charter support organizations (CSO) and non-profits that will provide advice and support dissemination activities. The application includes clear commitment from all NALT members and support letters from Michigan Department of Education, Michigan Alliance for Public Charter Schools and Ohio Council of Community Schools.

Weaknesses:

While the management plan and adequacy of resources is excellent, it is not outstanding without weaknesses because the budget narrative lacks sufficient detail to clearly demonstrate the project costs are reasonable in relation to objectives, design and potential significance. The personnel and fringe benefit costs increase slightly in year two, and then decrease in year three without any justification. There are no salary costs, only percentages of time allocated for project lead, marketing support and project support. Nor is there sufficient detail to demonstrate the work required of these staff and the positions are not listed as key personnel. Travel costs need to be broken down to provide evidence of reasonableness. For example, the project is requesting \$123,340 in travel for year two, but the narrative does not describe how many trips, estimated cost per trip for NALT, RCBN and project staff. Contractual and "other" requests are lump sum without a breakdown describing how funds will be used. This is especially important for the \$406,400 request for Momentum and Epicenter costs.

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 10 points):**
 - (1) **The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability;**
 - (2) **The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director or principal investigator; and**
 - (3) **The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.**

Strengths:

The project personnel quality is excellent. The applicant provides clear descriptions of the qualification, relevant training and experience of all key personnel, including co-directors (one from NCSI and one from Momentum). The co-directors' bios (137-145) and resumes (e81-105) demonstrate experience in public school accountability, federal grant management and evaluation of charter school quality, supporting high risk youth/alternative school accountability, charter school leadership and CSO experience. The project notes that a key staff person will be both IT and administrative assistant that will be hired upon award and are expected to be able to manage website creation, logistics and dissemination (e62-62).

Weaknesses:

The quality of project personnel does not meet outstanding without weakness because it is only partially responsive to sub-criterion 1 (encouraging applications from underrepresented persons) and information regarding some key personnel are missing. While the applicant does respond to sub-criterion 1 and describes that it will 'welcome and seek' applications (e62) from underrepresented personnel, the application does not provide information regarding the processes in place, or that will be put in place to 'encourage applications' from underrepresented persons. In addition to the key personnel identified above, several individuals, including a project consultant are identified as key personnel and resumes/bios are included, but responsibilities are not defined (e137-145).

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible (up to 10 points).**

Strengths:

The quality of the evaluation for the proposed project is outstanding without weakness. The applicant clearly describes, through bio and resume (e71, 81) the evaluation capacity of Basis Policy Research and the lead evaluator. The evaluator has experience as principal investigator and evaluator on multiple projects and is currently working in these capacities on four projects, three of which are federal grants. Basis has a strong history of work in the charter sector including creation and management of NAPCS public charter school dashboard and a CSP project with NACSA.

The evaluation plan exceeds federal requirements by meeting all required components and including both process and outcome performance measures and targets (e71-75). Baseline data is identified as zero since all tools will be newly developed. The evaluation plan is ambitious and meaningful and will evaluate not only access to tools, but also implementation of tools. The project will use mixed methods and the applicant describes the qualitative and quantitative data collection processes (e75-76).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: **10**

Priority Questions**Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process****1. Competitive Preference Priority 1--Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process for Educational Agencies with the Most Need (Up to 5 points, only available to applicants meeting Absolute Priority 1)**

Projects that propose to target one or more of the following: States that have enacted laws in the last five years allowing charter schools to open; authorized public chartering agencies (as defined in the NIA) with fewer than ten charter schools; and authorized public chartering agencies that authorize a significant number of charter schools experiencing significant low performance or non-compliance with academic, financial, governance, or operational (including school safety) requirements.

Strengths:

The applicant provides an outstanding, without weakness, description of its ability to build capacity in authorizing for LEAs with the most need. Primarily, the A-Game project will target authorizers who have a significant number of alternative education charters (AEC) in their portfolio. The applicant provides strong evidence that AECs are often considered low performing on state accountability systems, due to the nature of the program missions to serve extremely high need students and the lack of differentiation in those systems (e22). This includes data from Georgia, one of the target states, making the connection between AECs and low performance on state accountability reports (e22-23). The applicant provides an excellent description of the authorizers it plans to serve (e22-23), and the letters of support (e107-125) document clear commitments from 11 authorizers that will begin the work as members of the National Authorizer Leadership Team (NALT).

The applicant's secondary target (and initial demonstration focus) will be authorizers that only have 1-2 schools with those schools being AECs. They provide sound evidence that A-Game partners know who their target authorizers will be and have a plan to conduct outreach required to engage the secondary targets (e22). For example, Momentum Research and Strategy (Momentum) has documented there are 204 authorizers in the United States (US) that serve 684 AECs. Of those authorizers, 133 only authorize 1 school and, of that number, 127 are school districts. The A-Game will target the 133 authorizers who serve one AEC for participation in the Regional Capacity Building Network (RCBN).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: **5**

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Empowering Families and Individuals**1. Competitive Preference Priority 2--Empowering Families and Individuals To Choose a High-Quality Education That Meets Their Unique Needs (Up to 5 points)**

Projects that are designed to address increasing access to educational choice for one or more of the following groups of children or students:

- (i) Children or students with disabilities.
- (ii) English learners.
- (iii) Students who are Indians, as defined in section 6151 of the ESEA.
- (iv) Children or students in communities served by rural local educational agencies.

Strengths:

The applicant does not address this competitive priority.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not address this competitive priority.

Reader's Score: **0**

Status: Submitted
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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: The Institute for Excellence in Education (U282T180014)

Reader #4: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance of the proposed project		
1. Significance	35	32
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	26
Quality of Management Plan/adequacy of resources		
1. Management Plan/Resources	15	12
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	9
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	10	10
Sub Total	100	89
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process		
1. Building Capacity	5	4
Sub Total	5	4
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
Empowering Families and Individuals		
1. Families and Individuals	5	0
Sub Total	5	0
Total	110	93

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - CSP National Dissemination - 1: 84.282T

Reader #4: *****

Applicant: The Institute for Excellence in Education (U282T180014)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance of the proposed project

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 35 points):

(1) The potential for generalizing from the findings or results of the proposed project;

(2) The extent to which the results of the proposed project are to be disseminated in ways that will enable others to use the information or strategies;

(3) The likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement; and

(4) The extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population.

Strengths:

The A-GAME proposes to improve opportunities for students at the highest risk of failure by advancing a nation-wide strategy to strengthen authorizing and oversight beyond the traditional compliance-based, one-size-fits-all approach by helping authorizers evolve their thinking and practices towards a performance-based personalized approach (pg. e21). By helping authorizers improve the quality, relevance, and rigor of their charter contracts with AECs, the A-GAME results can be generalized to other charter contracts and help school districts who oversee non-charter AECs (pgs. e29, e31). In addition, by helping authorizers feel more confident in their ability to hold AECs accountable they will be more willing to consider and approve charter applications from groups looking to serve more high-risk students (pg. e28).

The tools and resources developed throughout this project will be disseminated through the collaboration with the NALT, web-based data tools, A-GAME website that will contain open source documents and on-line training materials, and conference networking and formal presentations (pg. e30). In addition, NALT will disseminate project findings by providing regional assistance through presentations at regional charter school association conferences (pg. e30) and Regional Capacity Building Networks (pg. e32).

Through a multi-year, concerted national focus on the topic, and supplying authorizers with customizable tools and resources that would be nearly impossible for authorizers to access working on their own, change and improvement will take place (pg. e31). As the availability of these tools will drastically reduce the cost of developing authorizer-specific frameworks, many small authorizers will have the tools necessary to make improvements to their new and renewal application process (pg. e31). Also, authorizers selected to participate in the Regional Capacity Building Network will gain contact and connection with 1 – 3 experienced authorizers, which they can call for advice and technical assistance in the early stages of development and implementation of the newly learned processes (pg. e32).

The A-GAME is likely to build local capacity of charter authorizers of AECs to provide, improve, and expand services that address the needs of students with the highest-risk of failure as authorizers who are confident in their ability to hold AECs accountable are more willing to approve charter applications from groups looking to serve more high-risk students (pg. e28).

Weaknesses:

It is not clear how authorizers that are not selected to participate in the Regional Capacity Building Network will be able to access experienced authorizers for advice and technical assistance (pg. e32) or the level of improvement they will see from the A-GAME project other than if they choose to attend a presentation at a national or regional conference.

Reader's Score: 32

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 30 points):**

- (1) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c));**
- (2) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable;**
- (3) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition; and**
- (4) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.**

Strengths:

The applicant paints a compelling picture of the nation's problem with high school dropouts. It is estimated that 1.2 million students drop out of high school each year and over 5.5 million U.S. youth are neither employed nor attending school. The cost to taxpayers for young adults who are not in school or working is \$93 billion annually and \$1.6 trillion over the young adults' lifetimes in lost revenues and increased social services (pg. e36). A solution to reducing drop outs that is provided within the public education system is AEC programs/schools, which serve approximately 650,000 of the most challenged and difficult to reach youth (pg. e27). AECs tend to serve students with specific high-risk characteristics linked, empirically, to an increased likelihood of students dropping out of high school (pg. e25)

Authorizers of these AEC programs/schools face challenges specific to accountability, as most states that define AECs as schools tend to also include more robust systems of alternative accountability in state law (pg. e26). These accountability systems tend to be compliance-based and not performance-based (pgs. e20-e21). Therefore, across the nation, alternative schools are overrepresented on the lower end of state accountability rating systems, indicating there are problems with current accountability systems (pg. e22).

The A-GAME proposes four project goals: (1) strengthen authorizing and oversight, (2) build authorizing capacity, (3) disseminate best practices, and (4) catalyze excellence (pgs. e44, e51). Project goals, objectives, and outcomes are clearly specified and measurable (pgs. e47-e51).

Regional Capacity Building Networks represent an exceptional approach to providing selected AEC authorizers with peer mentors (experienced authorizers) and a network of like-minded colleagues (10-15 authorizers per region).

Weaknesses:

Most dissemination mechanisms require authorizers to actively select to access the information (e.g., visiting specific web pages, attending regional or national conferences and choosing related presentations, etc.) (pgs. e30, e32). It is not clear how the applicant determined the intentional selection process to identify the 13 states allowed to participate in the Regional Capacity Building Network (pg. e56). Most measures of the project focus on access to materials rather than the benefits seen by AECs and students as a result of better authorizing practices (pgs. e72-e75).

Selection Criteria - Quality of Management Plan/adequacy of resources

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and adequacy of resources for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan and adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 15 points):**

- (1) **The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks;**
- (2) **The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project; and**
- (3) **The relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project.**

Strengths:

The management plan appears adequate to achieve the four objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget (pgs. e57-e59, e131-e136). The A-GAME management plan includes clearly defined activities, staff responsible, timelines for activities, milestones for accomplishing project tasks, and alignment between the activity and project goals (pgs. e131-e136).

The costs are mostly for staffing, contractors, and stipends, which appear reasonable in relation to the objectives and design of the proposed project (pgs. e151-e152).

The application includes multiple letters of support and commitment (pgs. e107-e125).

Weaknesses:

While there are multiple letters of support and commitment for the A-GAME, there are not letters from all named participants (i.e., States participating in the Regional Capacity Building Network, Advisory Committee members, etc.) leaving some question regarding their commitment (pgs. e107-e125).

While the budget appears reasonable, there are some costs that were not completely explained, such as the breakdown of the \$450,000 cost for Epicenter (pgs. e151-e152). For example, how many authorizers will have access to Epicenter? What is the access cost per authorizer? Are there any other costs beyond an access cost?

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 10 points):**

- (1) **The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability;**
- (2) **The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director or principal investigator; and**
- (3) **The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.**

Strengths:

The identified project directors, Dr. Jody Ernst and Cheri Shannon, have demonstrated experience in evaluating programs, providing technical assistance, working with diverse constituencies, and on a national level (pgs. e62-e64, e86-e93), which would match the qualifications and experience required for the proposed project.

Key personnel, including Dr. James G. Goenner (pgs. e65, e96), Jim Griffin (pgs. e66, e97-e98), Jackie Mullikin (pg. e66), Nelson Smith (pgs. e66, e102-e105), Dr. Darlene Chambers (pts. E67-e68, e82-e85), and Mark Weinberg (pgs. e68, e99-e101), have extensive experience and qualifications for this project. In addition, support staff – including IT – are provided to assist with logistics and website needs (pg. e64).

Weaknesses:

While the application indicates the National Charter Schools Institute and Momentum Strategy and Research, the organizations collaborating on this grant application, welcome and seek applications for employment from all persons (pg. e62), the applicant does not describe how it will actively seek applications for employment from all persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented (pg. e62).

Reader's Score: 9

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible (up to 10 points).**

Strengths:

The applicant provided a detailed list of goals, process performance measures, and outcome performance measures (pgs. e72-e75). Basis, the selected evaluator, will collect data throughout the project (pgs. e75-e76) and analyze it using mixed methods to ensure the goals and outcomes were met (pgs. e75-e76).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions**Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process**

- 1. Competitive Preference Priority 1--Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process for Educational Agencies with the Most Need (Up to 5 points, only available to applicants meeting Absolute Priority 1)**

Projects that propose to target one or more of the following: States that have enacted laws in the last five years allowing charter schools to open; authorized public chartering agencies (as defined in the NIA) with fewer than ten charter schools; and authorized public chartering agencies that authorize a significant number of charter schools experiencing significant low performance or non-compliance with academic, financial, governance, or operational (including school safety) requirements.

Strengths:

The Institute for Excellence in Education's proposed project, Advancing Great Authorizing and Modeling Excellence (The A-GAME), targets authorized public chartering agencies (1) with fewer than ten charter schools and (2) that authorize a

significant number of charter schools experiencing significant low performance or non-compliance with academic, financial, governance, or operational requirements (pg. e22).

The A-GAME will start with identifying best authorizing practices through the National Authorizer Leadership Team (NALT) (pg. e30), then build local capacity through a regional network structure for selected charter agencies, the availability of access to open source materials, coaching support from NALT, and presentations at national and state conferences (pgs. e33-e35).

Weaknesses:

The applicant indicated the A-GAME will have a concentrated focus on LEAs in small and rural areas (pg. e40), but it is not clear in Table 8 which of the Alternative Education Campus (AEC) authorizers are from small or rural areas or whether those authorizers from small or rural areas will be chosen from the pool of authorizers (pg. e56).

Reader's Score: **4**

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Empowering Families and Individuals

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2--Empowering Families and Individuals To Choose a High-Quality Education That Meets Their Unique Needs (Up to 5 points)

Projects that are designed to address increasing access to educational choice for one or more of the following groups of children or students:

- (i) Children or students with disabilities.**
- (ii) English learners.**
- (iii) Students who are Indians, as defined in section 6151 of the ESEA.**
- (iv) Children or students in communities served by rural local educational agencies.**

Strengths:

The applicant did not address this section.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not address this section.

Reader's Score: **0**

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